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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 002327

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/27/2013

TAGS: [EU](#) [IT](#) [IT](#) [PREL](#) [PRELEU](#)

SUBJECT: ITALIAN MFA ON CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION PROCESS

CLASSIFIED BY: POL MC TOM COUNTRYMAN. REASON 1.5 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: IN A MAY 14 DISCUSSION ON THE EU CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION, MFA DIRECTOR FOR INSTITUTIONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

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LEGAL AFFAIRS, GUISEPPE BUCCINO, TOLD EMBASSY POLOFF THAT A TREATY SIGNING CEREMONY DURING THE ITALIAN EU PRESIDENCY WAS HIGHLY UNLIKELY. BUCCINO STATED THAT IT WOULD BE IMPERATIVE FOR THE IRISH TO CONCLUDE WORK ON THE IGC BY THE END OF THEIR PRESIDENCY IN JUNE 2004 OR THE MOMENTUM COMING OUT OF THE CONVENTION WILL BE LOST. ITALY SUPPORTS GISCARD'S PROPOSAL TO REPLACE THE SIX-MONTH ROTATING PRESIDENCY WITH A FULL-TIME COUNCIL CHAIRMAN, ELECTED FOR A RENEWABLE 2 1/2-YEAR TERM. ITALY ALSO ENVISAGES A MERGING OF THE CFSP HIGH REPRESENTATIVE (SOLANA) AND COMMISSION EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMISSIONER (PATTEN) POSITIONS, INTO A SINGLE DOUBLE HATTED EU FOREIGN MINISTER. ON THE MORE CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE OF STRENGTHENED COOPERATION ON DEFENSE POLICY, ITALY INSISTS THAT THE CRITERIA AND RULES FOR ENGAGEMENT MUST BE DECIDED BY UNANIMITY (IN ORDER TO PREVENT ANOTHER ESDP MINI-DEFENSE SUMMIT). ITALY WANTS TO ENSURE THAT THE CONVENTION'S WORK ON DEFENSE POLICY SUPPORTS BERLUSCONI'S GOAL OF IMPROVING TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS. BUCCINO WELCOMED THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXCHANGE VIEWS WITH EMBASSY POLOFF ON THE CONVENTION'S PROGRESS AND ANY POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) BUCCINO BEGAN THE MEETING BY STATING THAT THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION IS A "STRANGE ANIMAL." ARTICLE 48 OF THE TREATY OF ROME REQUIRES ANY CHANGES TO THAT TREATY TO BE DECIDED BY MEMBER STATES IN THE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE (IGC). BUCCINO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT DUE TO THE LACK OF VOTING POWER AMONG CONVENTION REPRESENTATIVES, DISCUSSIONS TEND TO BE RATHER GENERAL AND, THUS, THE PRESENTATION OF A FINAL PRODUCT IN THESSALONIKI SHOULD NOT BE OVERSTATED. ACCORDING TO BUCCINO, THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION WILL LIKELY
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CONTAIN SEVERAL AMENDMENTS ON THE MAIN INSTITUTIONAL TIE-UPS, E.G. ON A FULL TIME COUNCIL PRESIDENT AND ON THE SIZE OF THE COMMISSION. BUCCINO ALSO ADMITTED THAT IT WOULD BE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO FINISH THE WORK OF THE IGC DURING ITALY'S PRESIDENCY, BUT STRESSED THE URGENCY IN COMPLETING THE PROCESS BY THE END OF THE IRISH PRESIDENCY IN JUNE 2004. OTHERWISE, THE EU WOULD BE FACING AN "INSTITUTIONAL MESS." THERE ARE SEVERAL FACTORS IN 2004, SUCH AS EU PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AND REFORM OF THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY, WHICH WOULD DISTRACT ATTENTION FROM THE WORK OF THE CONVENTION. BUCCINO NOTED THE SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE OF SIGNING THE NEW TREATY IN ROME AND INDICATED THAT THE IRISH AND OTHER EU MEMBER STATES WOULD AGREE TO THIS AS LONG AS ITALY WORKS FASTIDIOUSLY IN HELPING THE IRISH TO COMPLETE THE WORK OF THE IGC.

13. (C) ITALY SUPPORTS CONVENTION PRESIDENT GISCARD'S PROPOSAL TO REPLACE THE SIX-MONTH ROTATING PRESIDENCY OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL WITH A FULL-TIME CHAIRMAN, ELECTED FOR A RENEWABLE 2 1/2-YEAR TERM. BUCCINO DESCRIBED TWO MAIN ROLES FOR THIS INDIVIDUAL: PREPARING, CHAIRING AND FOLLOWING UP THE DECISIONS OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, AND REPRESENTING THE EU ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE (WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO THE COMPETENCIES OF THE COMMISSION, OR THE DAILY CONDUCT OF FOREIGN POLICY BY THE EU FOREIGN MINISTER). BUCCINO NOTED THAT THIS PROPOSAL IS STRONGLY OPPOSED BY THE SMALLER MEMBER STATES AND ACCESSION COUNTRIES, WHICH SEE IT AS A PLOT TO CREATE A DIRECTOIRE OF THE BIG STATES. ITALY RECOGNIZES THAT FAILURE TO REACH AGREEMENT ON THIS CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE COULD ENDANGER THE CONVENTION'S CHANCES OF SUBMITTING A FINAL TEXT AT THESSALONIKI. ACCORDING TO BUCCINO, ITALY HOPES TO
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FACILITATE A COMPROMISE ON THIS ISSUE BEFORE THESSALONIKI IN ORDER TO EASE OF THE WORK OF THE IGC.

14. (C) ITALY ALSO ENVISAGES A MERGING OF THE CFSP HIGH REPRESENTATIVE (SOLANA) AND COMMISSION EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMISSIONER (PATTEN) POSITIONS, INTO A SINGLE DOUBLE HATTED EU FOREIGN MINISTER. ITALY'S GOAL IS TO SIMPLIFY THE INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE EU AND, THUS, BELIEVES A FOREIGN MINISTER WOULD PROVIDE FOR MORE CONSISTENCY AND EFFICIENCY IN EU EXTERNAL POLICY. A MAJORITY OF MEMBER STATES SUPPORT THIS PROPOSAL AS LONG AS THERE IS A GENUINE

DOUBLE HATING WITH A LOCATION IN BOTH INSTITUTIONS. HOWEVER, BUCCINO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE ARE TECHNICAL DISAGREEMENTS AMONG MEMBER STATES AS TO HOW THIS PERSON SHOULD BE NOMINATED.

15. (C) BUCCINO SAID THAT ITALY HAS OBJECTIONS TO THE CONVENTION'S WORK ON DEFENSE POLICY, SPECIFICALLY ARTICLE 30.6 OF THE PRESIDIUM'S DRAFT TEXT. GISCARD'S PROPOSAL CALLS FOR STRENGTHENED COOPERATION ON DEFENSE POLICY, BUT PROVIDES NO STRICT CRITERIA OR RULES FOR ENGAGEMENT. ITALY'S OBJECTION IS THAT ARTICLE 30.6 LEGITIMIZES A GROUP OF MEMBER STATES TO ACT INDEPENDENTLY FROM THE EU, AS OCCURRED DURING THE ESDP MINI-SUMMIT. ITALY'S POSITION IS THAT STRENGTHENED

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ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00	SRPP-00
	DS-00	EAP-00	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	LAB-01	L-00
	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OMB-01	PA-00	PM-00
	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	T-00
	USIE-00	EPAE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-01	G-00
	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/004W				

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0098
INFO EU CANDIDATE STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
EU INTEREST COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY
AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY
AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY

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COOPERATION MUST BE DECIDED BY UNANIMITY IN ORDER TO ENSURE MEMBER STATES ARE WORKING TOWARDS A COMMON EUROPEAN POSITION. IN ITS ROLE AS EU PRESIDENT, ITALY WANTS TO GUARANTEE THAT THE CONVENTION'S WORK ON DEFENSE POLICY SUPPORTS ITALIAN PM
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BERLUSCONI'S GOAL OF CLOSING THE TRANSATLANTIC RIFT.

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